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**TRADITION AND DRAMATIZATION:  
THE "MISERICORDIA" VOCABULARY IN THE MEDIEVAL  
MARIAN DEVOTION OF THE OCCIDENT\***

In his study *For a Metaphysic of Pardon*,<sup>1</sup> Alain Gouhier analyzes the foundations on which human beings could build a city where they would know how to pardon and would will it. A city of pardon must be founded on God and his "agape" as revealed in the Old and New Testaments. Gouhier devotes a chapter to what he calls "The Light of Ephesus." He sees in Mary the "Mediatrice of our conscience and love of God," the "place where mankind participates in the genealogical activity of Wisdom";<sup>2</sup> for "by her Fiat, Mary made herself responsible for a new history of the Father in the history of the human family."<sup>3</sup> The Council of Ephesus, which specified and clarified the Marian mediation implicit in Tradition, was, therefore, beneficial; by means of it we escaped from the merely mythological field, and we averted that "tragedy" which is "a lack of deciphering."<sup>4</sup> Gouhier quotes Roland Barthes: "Tragedy is only a means to absorb human misery, to subsume it, therefore to justify it under the form of a necessity, a wisdom, a purification. . . ."<sup>5</sup>

If our time is interested in a human city of pardon, the Middle Ages were interested in the pardon that God grants continually to men who constantly offend him. How do we then understand justice and mercy in God and, subsequently, in and for ourselves? People of medieval times illustrated the temptation of "tragedy" in their religious plays, the "miracles," where God, Christ, Mary, the saints, the good and the bad angels

\* An address on the *Misericordia* Vocabulary in the Marian Devotion of the Latin Medieval Period from St. Bonaventure to Gerson was given by the author, in French, at the International Mariological Congress held in Rome by the Academia Mariana Pontificia Internationalis (1975). It will appear in the *Acta* of this Congress.

<sup>1</sup> Alain GOUHIER, *Pour une métaphysique du pardon* (Paris: Epi, 1969).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 335.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 336.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>5</sup> A. Gouhier quotes a text cited in A. ROBBE GRILLET, *Pour un nouveau roman* (Paris: Gallimard, 1964), p. 55.

played their parts in the salvation of mankind. The preaching, the liturgy, the devotional prayers also reflected the Christian search of those times. We must study how people, during the occidental medieval period, tried to meet God revealing himself as infinitely just and infinitely merciful. The vocabulary of mercy—*misericordia*, *misereri*, *miseria*, etc.—the meaning given to these terms by those with faith in God and with Marian devotion, offers us the possibility of analyzing a language formed, on the one hand, by the Bible (in the Vulgate translation) and, on the other hand, by several centuries of meditations, of cult, of prayer, and of theological reflection where St. Augustine's influence was predominant.<sup>1</sup>

Christian piety has always found the God of Mercy through the mediation of Christ. After Ephesus, following the tradition elucidated by St. Irenaeus, people also emphasized the significance of the Mother of God: Mary, who guides us and helps us in our search for and in our encounter with the true God. In the thirteenth century, the following image prevailed, having been proposed already in the twelfth century by the genius of St. Bernard:

You were afraid to approach the Father; terrified at the mere sound of His voice, you took refuge among the foliage: He gave you Jesus as Mediator. What shall such a Son not be able to obtain from such a Father? He shall be "heard for His reverent submission," for the Father loves the Son. Are you also afraid to approach Him? "He is your Brother and your flesh," "tempted in all things but without sin," "that He might become merciful." It is him that Mary has given to you for your Brother. But perhaps you stand in awe of his divine majesty? For although He became man He did not cease to be God. Perhaps you desire an advocate even with Him? Have recourse to Mary. In Mary one finds a human nature that is not only free from all contamination of sin, but also one uniquely pure in her very nature. I do not doubt that she will also be heard for her reverent submission. Assuredly the Son will listen to His Mother and the Father will listen to His Son. My little children, behold the sinner's ladder.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Theodore KOEHLER, "The Significance and Imagery of *misericordia*, *misericors* in the Vocabulary of Medieval Spirituality," in *Studies in Medieval Culture* VI and VII (1976): 29-41; see also *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*, s.v. "Miséricorde."

<sup>2</sup> "Ad Patrem verebaris accedere, solo auditu territus ad folia fugebas; Jesum tibi dedit mediatorem. Quid non apud talem Patrem Filius talis obtineat? Exaudietur utique pro reverentia sua; Pater enim diligit Filium. An vero trepidas et ad ipsum? Frater tuus est et caro tua, tentatus per omnia absque peccato, ut misericors fieret; hunc tibi fratrem Maria dedit. Sed forsitan et in ipso majestatem vereare divinam, quod, licet factus sit homo, manserit tamen Deus. Advocatum habere vis et ad ipsum? Ad Mariam

Contemporary to the great Scholastics with their Summas, St. Bonaventure provides a remarkable example of theological reflection and spiritual meditation on the Christian theme of *mercy*: he takes the images and the vocabulary of the Bible, as they were adopted and transmitted by a twelve centuries-old Latin Tradition, and he integrates them into a synthesis both theological and spiritual, where he gives Mary the place she received in the work of divine mercy. A Marian text written by him in 1268 illustrates this theme:

When the First Principle, God, created mankind in his image and similitude, in the state of innocence, he created them so near to himself that they were able to be formed to the divine grace by the Uncreated Word. But after the fall of mankind into sin, the divine Wisdom managed a gracious condescension through the Word made flesh where they would be adapted to grace, and, because this was accomplished in the bosom of the glorious Virgin, we say to her: *Ave gratia plena Dominus tecum*; and the apostle, Paul, invites those who want to obtain the grace to draw near to the throne of grace, who is the glorious Virgin: "Let us go with confidence to the throne of grace." Therefore, at the first access, the Father of mercies (*Pater misericordiarum*) comes to us and in the same way the Mother of mercies (*Mater misericordiarum*). This is the first source of grace in us, the one of the Word made flesh. Extremely miserable are those who do not know this beginning, for they cannot have the grace.<sup>1</sup>

recurre; pura siquidem humanitas in Maria, non modo pura ab omni contaminatione, sed et pura singularitate naturae. Nec dubius dixerim, exaudietur et ipsa pro reverentia sua; exaudiet utique Matrem Filius et exaudiet Filium Pater. Filioli! Haec peccatorum scala . . ." See St. BERNARD of Clairvaux, "In Nativ. B.M.V." (*De aquaeductu*), 7: PL 183, 441. See also the theme of the *Pater misericordiarum* developed in Serm. 5, "In Nativ.," in *Sancti Bernardi Opera* (Rome: Ed. Cist., 1966), IV: 266-270.

<sup>1</sup> "Originale principium quod est Deus, quando creavit hominem ad imaginem et similitudinem suam in statu innocentiae, ita propinquum creavit illum sibi, ut per Verbum increatum informabilis esset homo ad gratiam. Postquam vero homo lapsus est per peccatum, providit divina sapientia modum condescensionis per Verbum incarnatum, per quod homo adaptaretur ad gratiam. Et quia istud factum est in utero Virginis gloriosae, ideo dictum est ei: 'Ave gratia plena, Dominus tecum'; et apostolus Paulus suadet volentibus gratiam obtinere, ut accedant ad thronum gratiae, id est, ad Virginem gloriosam. 'Adeamus, inquit, cum fiducia ad thronum gratiae ejus' (Heb. 4:16). Sic ergo prima facie occurrit nobis Pater misericordiarum et mater misericordiarum et Filius qui est lux misericordiarum. Sic patet prima originitio gratiae in nobis, quae fit per Verbum incarnatum. O infelicissimi! qui ignorant istud initium, gratiam habere non possunt". See St. BONAVENTURE, "De septem donis . . .," Collat. I, 5 in *Opera omnia* (Quarracchi, 1882, 1907), V: 458 ff. See also T. KOEHLER, "La Maternité spirituelle de Marie (Moyen âge occidental: 1250 à 1500)," *Études Mariiales* 17 (1960): 21 ff.

This passage treats the mercy of God and our participation in this mercy and, therefore, also the mercy of Mary towards us. In this field of drawing analogies between the Creator and his human creatures, St. Bonaventure is truly a son of St. Francis and a doctor par excellence of the great theory of divine exemplarity and human participation. His comparisons refer us constantly to the divine exemplars: the Father and his Son who became our brother. His doctrine is also full of the Spirit, the same who enlightened the Poverello of Assisi.

St. Bonaventure retains the classical definition of mercy which he found, for example, in St. Gregory the Great:<sup>1</sup> "*miser cordia*" comes from "*miserum cor*" (miserable heart), for when we sympathize with our neighbor who is in misery we feel this misery in our own heart in order to free the other from it.<sup>2</sup> This relation between misery and mercy brings up the question: how can God feel a misery similar to the one which afflicts our hearts when confronted with the misery of others? The Bible does not hesitate to describe God as being deeply-moved inwardly seeing our miseries, as Jesus described the father in the parable of the prodigal son. In his commentary on the text *per viscera misericordiae Dei nostri* (through the depths, literally, the bowels, of the mercy of our God) which ends the Canticle of Zacharias (Lk. 1:78), St. Bonaventure gives an analysis of the term "*miser cordia*" based on comparisons with other biblical texts.<sup>3</sup> The expression "*viscera misericordiae*" is defined according to Ephesians 2:24, "as an excess of love and compassion" (*Nimia dilectio et nimia compassio*). The biblical image is elaborated with the text of Isaiah 63:15, "Where is the multitude of your bowels and your mercies?" (*Ubi est multitudo viscerum tuarum et miserationum tuarum?*). The theme centers on the incarnation of the Son of God, in whom was realized what was prefigured in Genesis where it is said of Joseph, that upon meeting his brother, Benjamin: "his bowels were moved." We must imitate the divine example: "Be clothed as God's Chosen Race in the bowels of his mercy, in kindness. . . ." (*Induite, sicut electi Dei, viscera misericordiae, benignitatem . . .*, Col. 3:12).

<sup>1</sup> St. GREGORY THE GREAT, *XX Moralia*, c. 32, n° 63 (PL 76, 175B): "Misericordia . . . a misero corde vocata est, eo quod unusquisque intueatur quempiam miserum atque ei compatiens, dum dolore animi tangitur, ipse cor miserum facit, ut eum a miseria liberet, cui intendit."

<sup>2</sup> See quotation in St. BONAVENTURE, Sent., IV, Dist. 46, art. 1, q. 3, *Opera omnia*, IV: 960; "In Job," V, 17, *Opera omnia*, VI: 306.

<sup>3</sup> *Idem*, "In Luc.," I, 78, n° 138, *Opera omnia*, VII: 42.

Saint Bonaventure maintains this typical biblical expression of the divine mercy. In a letter probably written to Princess Blanche, daughter of St. Louis, he explains that the soul should feel about God, the God of perfection, sentiments highly noble, highly saintly, highly pious (*Piissime*); this last quality is manifest when one admires, embraces and blesses the immense divine mercy, his supreme kindness in the Incarnation, as "visceral" in the strongest sense,<sup>1</sup> in the mystery of the cross and of the death of Christ (*misericordia summe viscerosa*). This aspect of the divine mercy expressed in Christ is transposed further at the mystical level. In the parable, "The Prodigal Son," we see how the Father is moved to compassion/mercy when seeing the misery of his son (*misericordia motus*, in the text of the Gospel). He runs toward the boy and embraces him. St. Bonaventure annotates this gesture of mercy with a reference to the Cantic of Canticles (2:6): "His left arm was under my head, his right embraced me."<sup>2</sup> According to a classical interpretation given by the mystics of the Middle Ages and summarized in *Glossa ordinaria*, this embrace given to his repentant and retrieved son is linked to the kiss about which the bride speaks in the Cantic (1:1). The parable describes the reconciliation of the sinner with God. The kiss means that "mercy and truth (which is justice) now have met, justice and peace now have embraced" (Ps. 84:11). The ultimate origin of this kiss is in the Word-made-flesh, in whom we contemplate the supreme union of love: the meeting of two natures where God and humanity exchange the kiss of the Cantic for all eternity.<sup>3</sup> The work of Divine Mercy is, there-

<sup>1</sup> *Idem*, "De regimine animae," II, *Opera omnia*, VIII: 128: (1) "Primum omnium necesse habes, anima mea, altissime, piissime, et sanctissime de optimo Deo sentire . . . (2) . . . Piissime . . . si eiusdem misericordiam admiraris, amplexaris et benedixis ut summe benignam in humanitatis et mortalitatis nostrae assumptione, ut summe viscerosam in crucis et mortis perpeffione, et summe liberalem in Spiritus Sancti datione et sacramentorum institutione . . ."

<sup>2</sup> *Idem*, "In Luc.," c. 15, 21 n° 34, *Opera omnia*, VII: 395: "Et accurrens cecidit super collum eius, per gratiam concomitantem; quasi dicat: amplexatus est eum, secundum illud Cantorum secundo: 'Laeva me': et hoc est per gratiam concomitantem, quae adiuuat ad portandum iugum divinae legis. Unde Ambrosius: 'Super collum filii cecidit, dum leve iugum dilectionis sibi imposuit.' Hoc enim iugum adiuuat ad portandum onus."

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*: "Amplexus divini brachii est humanitas Verbi incarnati; unde Glossa: 'Brachium id est Filium, in amplexum revertantis humiliavit'; de quo brachio in Psalmo: 'Salvavit sibi dextera eius et brachium sanctum eius.' Et per istum amplexum solvuntur vincula peccatorum, secundum illud Isaiae quinquagesimo secundo: 'Solve vincula colli tui, captiva filia Sion.' Et osculatus est eum, per gratiam scilicet subsequentem; osculum enim signum est amoris et pacis. Unde Beda: 'Rediens osculum caritatis a patre accipit, dum per gratiam certificatur de indulgentia,' secundum illud ad Ephesios

fore, the fruit of reciprocal love where the offended and the offender meet at the same level of charity, as father and son, as bridegroom and bride. The Incarnation is the revelation of and the divine solution given to the exigencies of mercy and justice.

How does the human creature imitate the divine mercy? In a homily commenting on the text, "Be merciful as your Father in heaven is merciful" (Lk. 6:36), St. Bonaventure presents the Divine Exemplar as educating our reason. In the example of the Heavenly Father, mercy appears as gratuitousness, expectation, and clemency. Mercy is gratuitousness; we must imitate the merciful God who, despite the contempt that sinners show him, accepts to send his own son. We must take, then, the initiative of peace; for God wants our salvation more than sacrifice: "Let us accept the example of such a kindness and mercy; let us be the first to ask peace of those who are persecuting and offending us; let us be clothed by the bowels of the mercy of God as his true and beloved sons—sons of the Father of mercy." Furthermore, this mercy is patient; it is long-suffering. The divine mercy, so to say, hides our sins, because God does not at once punish his offenders. In the same manner we must be patient, supporting the defects and hard-heartedness of others, waiting for their freely-chosen correction. Finally, mercy is clemency; in imitation of the Father who welcomes his unworthy son with the kiss of peace and concord, we must learn to forgive our enemies in a total forgiveness of the offense at the level of a love which is uniting.<sup>1</sup>

The seven corporal works of mercy give us the possibility of imitating the example of the Father: to visit the sick, to give drink to the thirsty, to feed the hungry, to ransom the captives, to clothe the naked, to shelter the homeless, to bury the dead (*visito, poto, cibo, redimo, tego, colligo, condo*). To these corporal works of mercy correspond seven spiritual works of mercy: to instruct, to counsel, to console, to help, to pardon, to support, to pray for all. The morality and the spirituality of the Middle Ages gave to these works an extreme and eschatological importance. They comprise the requirements of Christ for the Last Judgment. Only those who practiced these works of mercy will be elected to the Kingdom of the Father. For, as it

primo: 'In quo credentes signati estis Spiritu promissionis sancto, qui est pignus hereditatis nostrae' . . . 'Misericordia et veritas obviaverunt sibi, iustitia et pax osculatae sunt.' Istius deosculationis origo est in Verbo incarnato, in quo est unio summi amoris et connexionis duplicis naturae, per quam Deus nos osculatur, et nos Deum deosculamur, secundum illud Canticorum octavo (v. 1): 'Quis mihi det te fratrem meum ut inveniam te foris et deosculer te, et iam me nemo despiciat' . . ."

<sup>1</sup> *Idem*, "In Domin.," I post Pentec. Sermo II, *Opero omnia*, IX: 347 ff.

is expressed in the letter of St. James (2:13), "a judgment without mercy awaits those who were not merciful."

This eschatological aspect of the divine judgment leads us to the heart of the matter which serves to define the relations between mercy and justice: their union in God. St. Bonaventure is aware of the complexity of the meanings given to these terms when they are applied to God. We can speak about the mercy and the justice that God manifests in his works; their union in God appears there under three forms.<sup>1</sup> In the broadest sense, mercy is the overflowing of divine goodness (*affluentia divinae bonitatis*), and justice is its fitting accomplishment (*divinae bonitatis condecencia*); all the works of God come from his mercy. It is from the overflowing of his goodness that they are accomplished, according to what is fitting to this goodness (*debet*). In this sense, mercy and justice are united in God. In the ordinary signification of these terms, mercy means the divine goodness—God giving his goods to excess (*benignitas in supererogatione*), and justice is the divine generosity in giving awards. God unites mercy and justice when he rewards those who are worthy, going beyond their merits. Finally, in a very strict sense, mercy means compassion to alleviate evils and justice expresses the proper punishment of evildoers. We make a distinction between the work of justification, where mercy is predominant, and the work of retribution, where justice is predominant. But in God, mercy and justice have one sole cause; only in creatures do the effects of mercy and justice appear different.

Mary enters into this theology of mercy and justice under the title of *Mother of Mercies* or *Mother of Mercy*. There are two texts which especially

<sup>1</sup> *Idem*, Sent., IV, Dist. 46, art. 2, *Opera omnia*, IV: 962 ff. "Quomodo misericordia et veritas eandem respiciant operationem." (q. 2, concl.; p. 964): "Misericordia dicitur tripliciter, similiter et iustitia. Uno modo misericordia largissime dicitur divinae bonitatis affluentia; communiter vero dicitur benignitas in supererogatione bonorum; stricte vero dicitur pietas in sublevatione malorum. Similiter et iustitia dicitur communissime divinae bonitatis condecencia; communiter vero dicitur liberalitas in retributione praemiorum; stricte severitas in punitione malorum. Secundum igitur hos tres modos simul currunt in eodem opere. Nam primo misericordia, divinae bonitatis affluentia, et iustitia, divinae bonitatis condecencia, sunt in eodem opere, ita quod in omni opere, quia omnia facit ex affluentia bonitate, et nihil facit ex affluentia bonitate nisi quod decet bonitatem suam. Similiter secundo modo misericordia, quae est benignitas in supererogatione bonorum, et iustitia, quae est liberalitas in retributione praemiorum, simul concurrunt, quia, cum retribuit bona, non retribuit nisi merenti et supra id quod meruit. Similiter tertio modo misericordia, quae est pietas in sublevatione malorum, et iustitia, quae est severitas in retributione malorum, simul currunt, quia nunquam ita severe punit, quin aliquod debitum de poena dimittat."



apply to Mary the image of Heb. 4:16, the throne of grace. We already quoted one of these texts;<sup>1</sup> the other is in a second sermon commenting on the passage, "Be perfect as your Father is in heaven," where St. Bonaventure compares divine mercy to the mercy of a doctor, of a mother, of a lord, of a professor.<sup>2</sup> Curiously, the comparison between God and a mother does not contain any Marian considerations, but the one made between God and a lord who forgives the faults of guilty servants contains the quotation from Heb. 4:16, "Let us go with confidence to the throne of grace in order to obtain mercy." This throne of grace is Mary, "mother of grace, mother of mercy, who cannot refuse her mercy to those who pray to her with devotion," as St. Bernard already declared.<sup>3</sup> According to the hierarchy of exemplarism, the mercy of Mary imitates perfectly the mercy of her Son. "We can say about you what is said about your Son, God: 'If someone cries to me I will listen, for I am kind and merciful'" (*benigna et miseratrix*; cf. Exod. 22:27).<sup>4</sup> The mercy of Yahweh is manifested in Jesus, Son of God.

Mary—the one nearest to Christ and to us—imitates by her mercy that of her Son. In this same spiritual orientation, we have the comparison between Mary and the Ark of the Covenant; over it (Exod. 25:23) was placed the *propitiatorium* (seat of mercy). It became a figure of Mary and of Christ, our advocate and the propitiation for our sins (cf. I Jn. 2:1). We find this comparison in a sermon for the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin in which Bonaventure comments on the text from the Apocalypse (11:19): "We saw then the Ark of the Covenant of God in the Temple." This verse is a kind of introduction to Chapter 12 where there appears the Woman clothed with the Sun.<sup>5</sup> This Ark of the Covenant, signifying the reconciliation of sinners

<sup>1</sup> See note 1, p. 39 above.

<sup>2</sup> St. BONAVENTURE, "In Domin.," I post Pentec. Sermo II, *Opera omnia*, IX: 349.

<sup>3</sup> See St. BERNARD, "Serm. in Assumpt.," No. 8: "Sileat . . ." (See quotation in the text of St. Bonaventure: note 4 below).

<sup>4</sup> St. BONAVENTURE, "In Domin.," I post Pentec. Sermo II, *Opera omnia*, IX: 350: "Quomodo relaxat reatum populi orationum instantia, dicit Apostolus ad Hebraeos quarto: 'Adeamus cum fiducia ad thronum gratiae eius, ut misericordiam consequamur et gratiam inveniamus in auxilio opportuno.' Dicit 'cum fiducia' quia cum fiducia nihil haesitando debet homo orare. Dicit 'thronum gratiae' quantum ad Virginem Mariam, quae, cum sit mater gratiae, mater misericordiae, nulli eam devote oranti potest misericordiam denegare. Bernardus: 'Sileat misericordiam tum, beata Virgo, si quis in necessitate sua te senserit defuisse. Et ideo vere potest dici de ea quod de Filio: 'Qui clamaverit ad me, exaudiam eum, quia benigna et miseratrix sum.'"

<sup>5</sup> *Idem*, "In Nativ. B.V.," III, 3, *Opera omnia*, IX: 718a: "Tertio efficax erat arca in reconciliando poenitentes. Exodi vigesimo sexto: Pones pro sitiatorium super arcam

(in Christ), suggests the Marian interpretation: we have access to Christ through the Virgin Mary who prays to her Son for us as Mother of Mercy, and who moderates the divine wrath against our sins. This allusion to a sinner's ladder (Mary, Jesus, the Father) shows its true meaning: the reconciliation of sinners is a work of justice and mercy. The effects of mercy are made more manifest to us in Jesus, our advocate and our propitiation, and in Mary, who is the mother of Jesus (mercy-made-flesh) and who imitates her Son. To Jesus, the Advocate before the Father, corresponds the intercession of Mary before her Son; to Jesus, the Reconciliation for Sin, corresponds the propitiation of Mary which manifests the tempering of the divine wrath, of the Father's strict justice towards sinners. There is no dissociation between divine justice and mercy; their union in God is an example for us.

St. Thomas Aquinas also starts from the Bible and Tradition to define the various significations of our Christian vocabulary of *miser cordia*. He analyzes such terms in his synthesis of the virtues, the gifts, the beatitudes which transform our life in holiness. *Miser cordia* indicates, on the one hand, a virtue and, on the other hand, a beatitude. The etymology of *miserum cor* and the classical definitions of Aristotle, Cicero, and St. Augustine establish that mercy is essentially the compassion by which one feels the misery of another as one's own.<sup>1</sup> But there is a difference between the "mercy-passion" which affects our sensibility and the "mercy-virtue" by which our reason transforms our merely emotional pity, so that the evil afflicting our neighbor becomes a spiritual displeasure to us (*motus appetitus intellectualis*).<sup>2</sup> This analysis leads St. Thomas to question in what sense one can say that mercy is the greatest virtue, since Luke 6:36 asks us first of all to be merciful as

testimonii in Sancta sanctorum. Quid per propitiatorium intelligitur nisi ille, per quem (est) remissio peccatorum? Primae Ioannis secundo: Advocatum habemus apud Patrem Iesum Christum iustum; et ipse est propitiatio pro peccatis nostris etc.; et istud propitiatorium (est) super arcam, quia ad ipsum accedimus per Virginem Mariam, quae tanquam mater misericordiae pro nobis ad Filium interpellat, iram Dei mitigat contra peccata nostra. In cuius figura primi Regum septimo: Factum est, ex qua die mansit arca Domini in Cariathiarim, multiplicati sunt dies. Cariathiarim interpretatur villa deficiens, per quam intelligitur iste mundus, qui semper tendit ad defectum propter peccatum; sed tamen dies gratiae multiplicantur per sufficientiam Virginis gloriosae."

<sup>1</sup> St. THOMAS AQUINAS, *S. Th.*, II-II, q. 30, *De misericordia*.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, art. 3: "Misericordia importat dolorem de miseria aliena. Iste autem dolor potest nominari, uno quidem modo, motum appetitus sensitivi. Et secundum hoc misericordia passio est, et non virtus. Alio vero modo potest nominari motum appetitus intellectivi, secundum quod alicui displicet malum alterius. Hic autem motus potest secundum hunc motum ratione regulatum regulari motus inferioris appetitus."

our Father in heaven.<sup>1</sup> With St. Paul, Thomas Aquinas responds: "Above all have charity" (Col. 3:14), a text which begins precisely with the recommending of biblical mercy: "Be clothed with (the bowels of) mercy (Col. 3:14)." Charity is, therefore, the first virtue. But when we compare the virtues from the point of view of the concept of virtue in itself, mercy is the greatest among them; for mercy is gift to another and, furthermore, it is help given to another explicitly in his needs, which is the supreme indication of its superiority. Indeed, it is proper to God to be merciful (*misereri ponitur proprium Deo*). There is no contradiction: through charity we are assimilated to God and united with him by love (*per affectum*); through mercy we are assimilated to God according to a similitude of action.<sup>2</sup> Mercy is really a very important virtue; it is directly linked to charity and, apart from the general system of the moral virtues, with joy and peace,<sup>3</sup> though these terms indicate effects of charity rather than specific virtues. Finally, as a moral virtue, mercy has its complement in the other virtues, particularly justice. Mercy without justice is anarchy (*maler dissolutionis*), and justice without mercy is cruelty (*crudelitas*); they temper each other.<sup>4</sup>

Then again, *miser cordia* indicates one of the evangelical beatitudes which are more than virtues, for they manifest a life totally surrendered to the Holy Spirit and his gifts. Mercy is the beatitude which corresponds to the gift of counsel which perfects the virtue of prudence.<sup>5</sup> The great cardinal virtue of prudence directs our entire moral and spiritual life, and the gift of counsel gives the direction of this power over to the Holy Spirit who transforms our potential activity into a divinized life lived in the Spirit. Being "the blessed, the merciful" (Mt. 5:7), elevates our entire life, therefore, to the level of the perfection of the Father, God of all mercy. According to the identification *pietas-miser cordia*, mercy is useful for all: *pietas ad omnia utilis est* (I Tim. 4:8). Such a beatitude, in conformity with the tradition about the works of mercy, conforms us to the charity of Christ and prepares us for the Final Judgment: it helps us to enter into our eternal beatitude. It is interesting to know that *pietas* in its proper meaning is, on the one hand, a virtue linked to justice (piety toward God, toward our parents,

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, art. 4.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, art. 3 and 4: "... per caritatem assimilamur Deo tanquam ei per affectum uniti. Et ideo potior est quam misericordia, per quam assimilamur Deo secundum similitudinem operationis."

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, art. 3 ad 3; cf. II-II, 28 prol.

<sup>4</sup> *Idem*, *Catena aurea in Mt. 5:8* (Ed. Parma), XI: 57.

<sup>5</sup> *Idem*, *S. Th.*, II-II, q. 52.

etc.) and, on the other hand, a gift of the Holy Spirit by which we cry, "Abba, Father."<sup>1</sup> It transforms our justice, our holiness, into filial piety toward God: "*justitia*" is penetrated by the love of all our fellow humans in God, for relations of universal brotherhood. What is the beatitude which transforms this piety? St. Thomas, following St. Augustine, links piety to "Blessed the meek" (*mites*, Mt. 5:4), but he notes that the beatitude of the merciful or of the pure of heart would be more conformable to this notion of beatitude.

When St. Thomas analyzes the Divine Mercy, he enters into the classical problem of how justice and mercy are united in God (*de justitia et misericordia Dei*).<sup>2</sup> In his thesis, George Frankowski exposed the main ideas of the Angelical Doctor about the excellence of the divine mercy.<sup>3</sup> The analogy with human virtues does not suppose that God feels our miseries as his own, but it indicates that the divine goodness is the fountain of all mercy and that God is infinitely merciful in all his works. He delivers us from all our miseries which are an obstacle to our happiness, the greatest misery being sin. Truly, all the divine works manifest both the justice and the mercy of the Creator, our Father. They reflect his justice, for he accomplishes them according to the order and the limits fitting with his wisdom and his goodness. Therefore, the justice of the divine works presupposes their merciful character and provides them their foundation. Strictly-speaking, God has absolutely no debt towards his creatures. The whole creation finds its source in his overflowing goodness, and God in his mercy turns aside whatever becomes an obstacle to our true happiness. Thus, in the reconciliation of sinners, the divine mercy appears as a fullness of justice;<sup>4</sup> his pardon converts, turns aside, the obstacles to beatitude.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, q. 121, art. 2: "... in adaptatione beatitudinum ad dona duplex convenientia potest attendi. Una quidem secundum rationem ordinis: quam videtur Augustinus fuisse secutus. Unde primam beatitudinem attribuit infimo dono, scilicet timori; secundam autem, scilicet, *Beati mites*, attribuit pietati; et sic de aliis. Alia convenientia potest attendi secundum propriam rationem doni et beatitudinis. Et secundum hoc, oporteret adaptare beatitudines donis secundum obiecta et actus, Et ita pietati magis responderet quarta et quinta beatitudo quam secunda. Secunda tamen beatitudo habet aliquam convenientiam cum pietate: inquantum scilicet per mansuetudinem tolluntur impedimenta actuum pietatis."

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, I, q. 21.

<sup>3</sup> G. FRANKOWSKI, *De misericordia divina ejusque excellentia secundum s. Thomam* (Rome, 1962).

<sup>4</sup> ST. THOMAS AQUINAS, *S. Th.*, I, q. 21, art. 3 ad 2: "Misericordia non tollit justitiam, sed est quaedam justitiae plenitudo."

With St. Bonaventure and St. Thomas Aquinas, the "*miser cordia*" vocabulary became more precise and contributed to a Christian synthesis remarkable for its correspondence with Revelation. Marian devotion utilized the themes that developed in this way; St. Bonaventure is a good example. However, other authors of Marian works adopted this vocabulary and treated related themes in a very diverse way. Richard of Saint-Laurent compiled the titles that had become current for Mary by his time in a 12-volume encyclopaedic work, *De laudibus Beatae Mariae*, probably written about 1240-1250.<sup>1</sup> Although the influence of St. Bernard dominates this work, Richard speaks of Mary as our Mother, a title that St. Bernard did not use. Analyzing the virtues of Mary in Volume IV, he dedicates Chapter 23 to her generosity and mercifulness: *De largitate et misericordia*; his approach corresponds to Luke 6:36 ff., which unites these virtues. His work, though lengthy, does not constitute a synthesis; although Richard did write a general study on the virtues, it was never published.<sup>2</sup>

Mary is the true and unique imitator of her Son; through her Assumption, she is—as Christ is—rich in heavenly gifts. As Queen of heaven, she is merciful, in the sense of being bountiful. Richard links such virtue in Mary to her divine maternity. The God of love, who dwelled in Mary's womb, transformed her, giving to Mary "bowels of mercy" (*in affectum charitatis transisse Mariae viscera in quibus ipsa quae Deus est charitas novem mensibus corporaliter requievit*).<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> RICHARD OF SAINT LAURENT († ca. 1260?) See: P. GLORIEUX, *Répertoire des maîtres en théologie de Paris au XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris, 1933), I: 330-331, n° 148; B. KOROSAK, *Mariologia S. Alberti Magni ejusque coequalium* (Rome, 1954), p. 28 ff.—P. DANOU, in his article, "Richard . . .," in *Histoire littéraire de la France* (Paris, 1838), 19: 23-27, places the date of death around 1260. J. QUÉTIF / J. ÉCHARD, *Scriptores Ordinis Praedicatorum recensiti* . . . (New York, 1959), I: 1776, quote a Mss (Paris, BN lat. 3173) of the *De Laudibus* . . ., saying that this Mss was offered by the author to Hugh of Saint-Cher († 1263) while he was cardinal (1244-1263). This *De Laudibus beatae Mariae Virginis* (Libri XII) was falsely attributed to St. ALBERT THE GREAT (*B. Alberti Magni . . . Opera omnia* [Ed. Borgnet; Paris: Vives, 1899] XXXVI); it is partly dependent on Hugh of Saint-Cher's *Postilla in Luc. 1* (cf. KOROSAK, *op. cit.*, pp. 30-31).

<sup>2</sup> Cf. P. Glorieux, *op. cit.*, n° 148. In *De Laudibus* . . ., Lib. XII, c. 1, n° 6 (Ed. Borgnet XXXVI: 604), the author speaks about various virtues, and main virtues are singled out: "Per prima vero unguenta virtutes praecipuae designantur, scilicet charitas, misericordia, benignitas, et humilitas, quae inter omnes virtutes et fructu et merito, id est, efficacia merendi praecellunt."

<sup>3</sup> RICHARD OF SAINT LAURENT, *De Laudibus* . . ., Lib. IV, c. 23, n° 1 in *B. Alberti . . . opera omnia* (Ed. Borgnet), XXXVI: 237.

The author refers to the *Salve Regina, Mater misericordiae*. He uses the classical etymology: *misericordia, misereor*. As Queen, Mary has the power to relieve us from misery (*potentia miserendi*), and, furthermore, she is called *Mother of Mercy* because of her natural dispositions (*affectum miserendi*) which are those of a mother toward her children. Thus, the author considers Mary's natural maternal qualities but, above all, he explains God's action. This mercifulness of Mary is willed by God (one could say it is supernatural). Mary is a vessel of mercy prepared by the Lord for compassion in our time of misery (*vas misericordiae praeparatum a Domino in tempore miserendi quod modo est*).<sup>1</sup>

To sum this up, Richard freely associates the image of a mother, with her natural feelings, with his faith in "a grace of mercifulness which Mary has received from God" (*ipsa debet dare secundum gratiam et misericordiam quam accepit*).<sup>2</sup> Mary is a source of mercy (*fons*), a source of living waters that flow to her from Christ and through her to us. Above all, she is Mother of Mercy because of human sinfulness. Without the latter, the Incarnation would never have taken place, and the mother of God would never have existed: *ubi non est miseria, misericordia non habet locum*.<sup>3</sup>

So, in the mercifulness of Mary, Richard sees an effusion of love, of mercy, that comes from Christ, as an effect of the extraordinary presence of her Savior Son—Divine Mercy—within her. In this manner, through prayer at her Son's side, Mary spreads this mercy from heaven to all the faithful, much as she did by her intervention at Cana. Richard, paraphrasing John 2:3, has Mary saying: "My Son, the people are hungry and thirsty, and they need mercy; they need your compassion and your love, so that the wine of divine grace may bring joy to those who have been sad until now with only the knowledge of legal observance." Therefore, Cana is a symbolic figure of salvation that Jesus performs by turning the water of sinfulness into the wine of grace, and the water of our miseries into the wine of consolation. Mary intervenes, by her merit and her prayer, as Mother of Jesus; Richard goes on to clarify: "This mother prays for us with deep sighs that cannot be expressed (cf. Rom. 8:26) when, through the effusion of her grace, she makes us cry out in prayer and implore the pardon of our sins."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 238.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 237.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 238.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*: "Postulat enim pro nobis haec mater gemitibus inenarrabilibus quando per effusionem gratiae suae facit nos gemere et impetrare orando veniam delictorum." The use of Rom. 8:26, *gemitibus inenarrabilibus*, appears in the right context when Richard

But the author gets into a dangerous symbolism when he calls Mary a cloud which conceals sinners, protecting them from the scorching heat of the sun, in other words, from the anger of the Son (. . . *velut nubes misericorditer abscondit peccatores ab ardoribus solis, id est, ab ira Filii*).<sup>1</sup> The full context, however, lessens the potential danger of this affirmation: Mary's mercifulness conceals the sins of men *because of penance*. Furthermore, Richard develops the theme in a way that prepares for the iconographical representations of the wrath of God and the protection of Mary. Perhaps this dramatization was inspired by the paraliturgical plays performed in the portals of the cathedrals. Richard saw in this a more general doctrine. Explaining the title, "Mary advocate," he distinguishes many advocates *in curia Dei*:

Our *first advocate* is the Holy Spirit who prays for us with deep sighs that cannot be expressed (Rom. 8:26): in other words, since he is the Love of the Father and of the Son, he assuages the wrath which the Father has for us; he leads us into prayer. The *second advocate* is the Son of God, *semper vivens ad interpellandum pro nobis* (Heb. 7:25). Like a victorious athlete, he shows his Father the stigmata of his passion, and he requests of the Father the grace of the Holy Spirit for us. The *third advocate* is the Blessed Virgin, who requests, especially of her Son, all goodness in general for us.

Richard holds that,

before Mary was born, we did not have an advocate before the Son. As the Father said in Gen. 2:18, "It is not good that he should be alone"; in other words: it is not sufficient to have only one advocate or intercessor or mediator in heaven for mankind, when they face so many perils and evils. *Faciamus ei adiutorium*, referring to the Blessed Virgin, so that she may intervene for mankind before her Son, as the Son does before me.<sup>2</sup>

Then Richard quotes Saint Bernard, though, actually, the author of the text cited was a friend of St. Bernard, Arnold of Bonneval (died sometime after 1156). This text became so famous, it was attributed to the more famous authority:

Securum accessum habet homo ad Deum ubi mediatorem causae suae Filium habet ante Patrem, et ante Filium matrem. Christus ostendit Patri latus et vulnera, Maria Christo pectus et ubera. Nec potest esse ullo modo repulsa ubi concurrunt et perorant omni lingua disertius haec clementiae monumenta et charitatis insignia.<sup>3</sup>

explains the role of the Holy Spirit as our advocate: Lib. II, c. 1, n° 19 (Ed. Borgnet), XXXVI: 68. It is clear that the author does not intend to replace the Divine Advocate (Paraclete) through the prayer of Mary.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, Lib. IV, c. 23, n° 2 (Ed. Borgnet), XXXVI: 239.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, Lib. II, c. 1, n° 18 (Ed. Borgnet), XXXVI: 68 ff.

<sup>3</sup> ARNOLD OF BONNEVAL, *De Laudibus B.M.*: PL 189, 1726.

Ultimately, we still have the angels and our alms as advocates before God. Richard again takes up the title, "Mary our Advocate," explaining this title through a dramatization which introduces the Mother of Mercy who oftentimes liberates those who had been condemned through the justice of the Son. This illustration is derived from a very accommodated interpretation of Deuteronomy 32:39 (Vulgate) which dichotomizes the manifestations of God's punitive justice and of his mercy between Christ and Mary.<sup>1</sup> Later iconography represented God shooting his arrows against sinners and Mary protecting these sinners, or even, Mary holding back her Son who is ready to punish:

(Advocata) quia saepe quos Filii justitia damnat, matris misericordia liberat. Quae scilicet justitia Filii et misericordia matris videntur sic altercari, quasi dicat justitia Filii: *Ego occidam et percutiam*. Misericordia matris respondeat: *Et ego vivere faciam et sanabo* (Deut. 32:39). Dicit etiam misericordia matris illud quod sequitur: *Et non est qui de manu mea possit eruere*. Fugias igitur sub protectione manus ejus sicut fecit Theophilus, et nihil timendum est: ipsa enim dicit. *Sicut nebula texi omnem terram*, ab ira scilicet Dei, quasi ab ardore solis. Ideo etiam ipsa dicit de Filio (Eccl. 24:6): Tenui eum, ne scilicet percuteret peccatores: nec dimittam, sed continua precum instantia furorem ipsius retinebo.<sup>2</sup>

The image of Mary as protectress underwent further transformation under the influence of other comparisons. As a compassionate mother hides her child under her cloak when the father wants to beat him, so does Mary protect those who seek refuge by her side when they fear Christ's justice. Even this image is somewhat rectified; in order to be able to find refuge under her Mantle of Mercy, one must become "small" through humility, be chaste and merciful.<sup>3</sup> Richard also exploits the "*Sileat . . .*" of Saint Bernard;<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Videte quod sum solus et non est alius deus praeter me; ego occidam et ego vivere faciam: percutiam et ego sanabo—et non est qui de manu mea possit eruere." Cf. *Deut.* 32:39.

<sup>2</sup> RICHARD OF SAINT LAURENT, *op. cit.*, Lib. II, c. 1, n° 23 (Ed. Borgnet), XXXVI: 70.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, Lib. XII, c. I, par. 9, n° 6 (Ed. Borgnet), XXXVI: 624: "Sicut enim pia mater abscondit filium suum sub pallio quando pater vult verberare: sic Maria fugientes ad se, Christi justitiam formidantes. Sed nota, quod res grossa et grandis non ita de facili potest abscondi: necesse ergo tibi est ad hoc ut possis abscondi sub pallio, id est, sub latitudine misericordiae ejus, ut sis parvus in oculis tuis per humilitatem, non turgidus per elationem; ut sis mundus per castitatem quia cum foetore luxuriae non posses ad eam propinquare: ut sis misericors, alioquin apud misericordiae matrem refugium non haberes."

<sup>4</sup> St. BERNARD: see note 3, p. 44 above.



in her mercy, Mary does not forget any of her servants. She does not abandon anyone, except those who abandon her; she has that power to liberate which is proper to queens. Richard develops this popular idealization:

It is proper to the privilege of queens to intervene in favor of those already condemned with a definitive sentence for their crimes and ill deeds; even when they have the rope around their neck, even when they are hanging at the gallows, even when their head is under the sword . . . if the queen intervenes and finds them still breathing, ready to exhale their last breath, she can free them. Thus I believe that the queen, in the kingdom of her Son, would not have less jurisdiction or enjoy fewer privileges.<sup>1</sup>

In the 12th volume of *De laudibus*, Richard examines Mary's works of mercy, and he praises the great work of mercy that the Virgin accomplished toward the poorest one, the Son of God, whom she loved above all by giving him a body and by nourishing him with her own milk.<sup>2</sup>

Richard of Saint-Laurent was interested in presenting Marian devotion by gathering all the titles given to Mary and explaining them in a manner by which he did not seek a doctrinal synthesis.<sup>3</sup> Quite another matter is the *Mariale*, long-attributed to St. Albert the Great. This *Super Missus Est* . . .<sup>4</sup> contains a lengthy scholastic explanation of Mary's fullness of grace. The author probably wrote this treatise at the end of the thirteenth century.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> RICHARD OF SAINT LAURENT, *op. cit.*, Lib. IV, c. 23, n° 5 (Ed. Borgnet), XXXVI: 240.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, Lib. XII, c. 1, n° 6 (Ed. Borgnet), XXXVI: 604: "Praecipua misericordiae opera animae suae praecipue medicinalia, quae praecipuo pauperi, scilicet Filio Dei, praecipua dilectione exhibuit, de propria et praecipua substantia sua . . . vestimentum et de lacte proprio nutrimentum."

<sup>3</sup> Richard of Saint Laurent is a "spiritual" of his time. We are surprised by his constant use of biblical texts in an accommodated sense. But he remains discreet in his use of "miracles." To illustrate the mercy of Mary, he quotes only the stories of Theophilus (seen above), of the Jewish boy saved from the furnace, and, curiously, of the strange legend of the pregnant abbess saved from dishonour—a miracle which is also given in Gautier DE COINCY, *Les miracles de Nostre Dame*. 5th ed., Fr. Koenig (Genève/Paris, 1953/61), II: 181 ff. See also *De laudibus*, Lib. II, c. 1, n° 26 (Ed. Borgnet), XXXVI: 73.

<sup>4</sup> B. Alberti . . . *opera omnia* (Ed. Borgnet), XXXVII: 1-362: "Mariale sive quaestiones super Evangelium: *Missus est Angelus Gabriel* . . ." Pseudo-Albert remains unidentified: cf. A. FRIES, *Die Unter dem Namen des Albertus Magnus überlieferten mariologischen Schriften; literarkritische Untersuchung* (Münster, 1954).

<sup>5</sup> For a study of this question, see "Zur Frage der Textgeschichte, Herkunft und Entstehungszeit der anonymen 'Laus Virginis' (bisher Mariale Alberts des Grossen)," *Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale* 25 (1958): 285-328. See also LÉON AMOROS, "La Realeza de Maria en el 'Mariale' atribuido a San Alberto Magno," *Estudios Maria-*

The mercy of Mary is analyzed both as virtue and as beatitude, although this distinction is not fully developed in itself. Both are seen to be in Mary in a supereminent degree (*plenitudo gratiae*). The virtue of mercy is analyzed in the "justice-mercy" theme,<sup>1</sup> the objections setting these two virtues in opposition by their effects. Because Mary is Mother of Mercy (Mother of Christ), she is known as *miserericordissima*. Then if one follows the objections which set justice in opposition to mercy (on earth), one could question Mary's practice of justice on earth (*in via*). The practice of justice is "to make right what is wrong, to punish, to chastize the vices": the *videtur quod non* denies that Mary most-merciful had to practice such justice on earth. We recognize here the problem of a Marian devotion which opposes justice (in Christ) and mercy (in Mary). In answer, Pseudo-Albert gives first a general definition of what moral virtue is and applies this to justice; he distinguishes two activities: *declinare a malo et facere bonum* (cf. Ps. 36:27, Vulgate). Therefore, he shows that Mary had the virtue of justice more than all other *viatores*; she alone "travelled" on earth without sin.<sup>2</sup> She excelled in good works more than any other person, since she gave birth to the Son of God. Furthermore, he notes that the works of mercy are also works of justice. Mary practiced them with a charity surpassing the charity of all others on earth.<sup>3</sup> At the Last Judgment, mercy will be seen as a duty of justice.

Following Richard of Saint-Laurent, the author points out the relationship between Mary and her Son, the starting point for the development of

*nos* 17 (1956): 131-149. The use of quotations taken from Serm. VI, "De assumptione" (*S. Bonaventura Opera* [Ed. Quaracchi], IX: 700b-706b), can no longer help to date the *Mariale*, since this sermon is not authentic. Cf. J. BEUMER, "Die Predigten des Heiligen Bonaventura . . .," *S. Bonaventura* (Grottaferrata, 1972/74), II: 450 ff.

<sup>1</sup> *Mariale*, q. 50: *In quo statu B. Virgo habuerit iustitiam respectu viatorum?* (Ed. Borgnet), XXXVII: 95. The author actually studies the co-existence of justice and mercy in Mary during her life on earth (*in via*). Objection 2 concludes: "Actus iustitiae in via est iustificare mala, et punire, et vitia castigare: quae omnia non fuerunt in beata Virgine: ergo non habuit actum iustitiae in via: ergo nec respectu viatorum, et per consequens super viatores."

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*: "Contra: Duae sunt partes iustitiae, scilicet declinare a malo, et facere bonum: sed utrumque istorum habuit beata Virgo super omnes puros viatores: ergo iustitiam habuit super viatores. Quod autem beatissima Virgo declinationem a malo habuit excellentius omnibus viatoribus, patet ex hoc quod sola ipsa viatrix fuit, quae numquam peccavit. Unde Augustinus: 'Excepta hac Virgine, de qua propter honorem Domini, cum de peccatis agitur, nullam volo habere quaestionem.'"

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 95-96.

a new Marian aspect of our spirituality: in her mercy, Mary helps the poorest, Jesus Christ himself, who is the One most worthy of mercy. The Blessed Virgin Mary practiced the virtue of mercy towards him; from her own flesh and blood, she wove him a tunic of various colors. She gave him the hospitality of her womb; she nourished him with the milk of her own body. The beatitude of mercy in Mary is yet more lengthily described,<sup>1</sup> although we note again that the author does not indicate clearly the difference between virtue and beatitude. The title *Mater Misericordiae* is reserved only for Mary; consequently, mercy is not in her some accidental quality, but is essentially linked with her divine maternity (*per modum originis essentialis*). The title *mater misericordiae* means, furthermore, that the reign of mercy took its origin in Mary. But the author emphasizes even more the title *regina misericordiae*, to which he dedicates a special section in another part of his book.<sup>2</sup> In Question 75, he makes the distinction between a reign of glory, which is also a reign of justice governed by the Holy Trinity, and a reign of mercy, which has its origin in Mary and which is directed by her in the sense that she gave us the merciful Christ who reigns over all those he redeemed. The Son of God attributes all his works to his Father, but his human operations can be attributed to his mother.

This argumentation is more precise than the explanations of Richard of Saint-Laurent. The *plenus gratiae* describes Mary's holiness on earth, which already surpasses the holiness of all other creatures. She surpasses us all in mercy because she reigns over us by her mercy, according to the belief of the Church expressed in the title *Regina misericordiae*.<sup>3</sup> Question 162 compares the title *Regina misericordiae* with other possibilities to show the excellence of the queenship of Mary: *regina pacis, gloriae, justitiae, imperatrix, dea dearum*(!), *regina peccatorum*. . . . The title *Regina misericordiae* is shown as superior to all the others (except the title *Mater Dei*, which is given first without any comparison). The general tendency of the author toward a "quantitative" argumentation appears in his use of "inclusions"; Queen of glory, of justice, are titles "included" in "Queen of mercy" because those who are in the kingdom of glory are also in the kingdom of mercy,

<sup>1</sup> *Mariale*, q. 75 (Ed. Borgnet), XXXVII: 131-132: *Utrum misericordia fuerit in ipsa?* (Found among the questions about the beatitudes in Mary.)

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, q. 162 (Ed. Borgnet), XXXVII: 234-237: *Utrum nomen reginae misericordiae proprie convenit B. Virgini?* (Found among the questions studying the privileges of Mary: titles proper to her alone.)

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, q. 75, 1 (Ed. Borgnet), XXXVII: 131; *ibid.*, q. 162, contra 2, 3 (Ed. Borgnet), XXXVII: 236.

but not vice-versa, etc. Nevertheless, he analyses the "power" involved in mercy, glory, grace, justice; all involve what is good, but mercy includes also deliverance from evil. The reign of mercy is, therefore, superior.<sup>1</sup> In all his reasonings, the author does not oppose justice and mercy as contradictories; therefore his discussion on the question of Mary's cooperation in our redemption, accomplished by Jesus on Calvary, is a sign of real theological progress.<sup>2</sup>

Among medieval prayers, the *Salve Regina* and similar texts were inspired significantly by the themes of mercy. The terminology *miseria-misericordia*, which defines mercy, appears in the invocations where Mary is asked to look at our miseries and be merciful: *Illos tuos misericordes oculos ad nos converte*. A Marian song of praise, traced back to a manuscript of the 12th century, develops the same themes: the unworthy implorer and the *mater misericordiae et pietatis*, the *mater piissima et misericordissima*.

O Sovereign Queen, I am also in a situation where my extreme unworthiness could only avert, from me and from my supplication, your virginal face so beautiful and venerable; nevertheless, I take special refuge near to you and I implore you that you may consent to show mercy and pity towards me and ask from your Son reconciliation and indulgence.<sup>3</sup>

Then the text continues, *Converte, igitur, mater piissima et misericordissima Maria, faciem tuam et oculos tuos et aures tuas ad nos et ad preces nostras, et suscipe de nobis in gratia et laudes tuas et postulationes nostras*. Let us note that the argumentation of the prayer arises from faith in Mary as *pia et misericordissima*. For her prayer in heaven is sovereign, guiding all the Communion of Saints; this is a notion in which we find again the Greek idea of Mary preceding and directing the people of God towards her Son: *credimus et scimus te mirabiliter piam et misericordissimam esse, utpote matrem*

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, q. 162 (Ed. Borgnet), XXXVII: 235: "Gloria et gratia et justitia per se tantum dicunt collationem boni: misericordia autem et collationem boni et ablationem mali per se: ergo plus comprehendit et in amplius se extendit regnum misericordiae quam regnum gloriae, gratiae, vel justitiae: sed ab ampliori potentia et majori est dignitas major et denominatio: ergo beatissima Virgo debet dici regina misericordiae a summa dignitate." See L. AMORÓS, *op. cit.*, note 5, p. 52 above.

<sup>2</sup> See C. DILLENSCHNEIDER, *Marie au service de notre Rédemption* (Haguenau, 1947), pp. 241-246. The author attributes the *Mariale* to St. Albert the Great. J. CAROL, *De correptione Beatae Virginis Maria* (Vatican City, 1950) reports the same confusion. A short critical appreciation is given by G. PHILIPS in "Marie et l'Église", *Maria* (Ed. Du Manoir), 7: 395.

<sup>3</sup> G. G. MEERSSEMAN, *Der Hymnos Akathistos im Abendland* (Freiburg, Switzerland, 1958-60), II: 178-179. For the origin of the *Salve Regina*, see H. BARRE, *Prières anciennes de l'Occident à la Mère du Sauveur* (Paris, 1963), p. 90 and references provided in his index.

*misericordie et pietatis et quia scimus et credimus, quoniam te orante pro nobis ad filium tuum, omnes ceteri sancti orabunt, omnes iuvabunt et, te tacente, nullus orabit, nullus iuvabit.*<sup>1</sup>

These images are part of the exemplarist spirituality which sees Mary as the Mother of Mercy (Jesus), the one who is herself the most perfect image of her Son, particularly under this aspect. Therefore, she is implored in the name of the mercy of Christ, or simply, in the name of her Son, to be merciful herself: *Dei Genitrix, per misericordiam filii tui miserere mihi*, or also, *Adesto, domina sanctissima, per nomen sanctissimi filii tui exaudi nos, misericordissima in omnibus necessitatibus succurre nobis, clementissima . . .*

The theme of the Last Judgment is frequently associated with the one of *Mater misericordiae*, because Mary is now in glory, seated at the right hand of her Son. This is a cause of joy and of prayer: *Gaude quia ad dexteram ejus sedes in coelis, et cum eodem domino nostro Jesu Christo ventura es ad (judicium) vivorum et mortuorum . . . tuere et protege me, excusa me miserum per tuam clementiam, mater misericordiae, mater refugii, mater consolationis, mater sancte spei. . .*<sup>2</sup>

To conclude this section on mercy language in Marian prayers, we have a collection of titles, presented in the litanic manner, where the idea of mercy is, so to say, explained and commented on by other themes. We find there two influences: the theme of the ancient antiphon *Sub tuum* and the "recommendation" or consecration of a servant, demonstrated especially well by St. Ildephonse. For example, in the strophes of this prayer from the fourteenth century, we read:

Ecce ad te confugio  
 Virgo, nostra salvatio  
 Fons salutis et veniae  
 Mater misericordiae.  
 Ecce tibi me commento  
 Et me servum tibi reddo  
 Tu, domina, me suscipe  
 Et clementer huc respice.<sup>3</sup>

The last verse refers to the theme of Mary "giving her look, her attention, to our miseries."

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, II: 230, 231, 233.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, II: 171.

<sup>3</sup> F. J. MONE, Ed. *Lateinische Hymnen des Mittelalters* (Freiburg-im-Breisgau, 1854 / Scientia Verlag Aalen, 1964), II: 361-365, n° 558.

We find popular expressions of the theme of mercy in the images, the illuminations, the paintings of the period. Recent studies of this iconography give a better understanding of its evolution, as can be seen, for example, in an article by Horst Appuhn.<sup>1</sup> Around 1400, the title *Mater misericordiae* was given to some pictures representing the virgin nursing her child. It is the theme, *mater Christi-misericordiae*, transplanted into a representation which expresses the intimacy between mother and child, according to the tendencies of the art of this period. Nevertheless, we must not forget that the *Virgo lactans* is a very old theme, already found in Coptic art of the sixth century and rendered classic in the Latin homiletic by St. Augustine in the prayer salutation: *Lacta, mater, cibum nostrum*.<sup>2</sup> We should also remember that Richard of Saint Victor transposed the theme to the spiritual level; Mary feeds us all with the milk of mercy: *miserorum mater facta es et miseros alere misericordiae lacte coepisti*.<sup>3</sup> James of Voragine stated it in a more general manner: *Maria dat nobis lac pietatis et misericordiae*.<sup>4</sup> Thus, from the theme the Virgin Mother of the merciful Christ, we pass to the mercy and the spiritual maternity of Mary towards us. Can we not see in this development, then, the source of two of the realistic treatments by which artists attempted to illustrate the spiritual and mystical signification of *alere misericordiae lacte*? One shows us the Blessed Virgin feeding St. Bernard, St. Fulbert, or sick people with her milk; another portrays Mary sprinkling her milk over the souls in purgatory, a symbol of her merciful alleviation of their sufferings.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> HÖRST APPUHN, "Maria, Mater misericordiae," in L. KÜPPERS, *Die Gottesmutter* (Recklinghausen: A. Bongers, 1974), I: 215 s.

<sup>2</sup> ST. AUGUSTINE, *Serm.* 369, I: PL 39, 1655. Cf. E. BISHOP, *Liturgica historica* (Oxford, 1918/repr. 1962), pp. 200-203; H. BARRÉ, *Prières Anciennes . . .*, pp. 23-25. (See bibliography in his note 20.) For poetry, see also A. SALZER *Die Sinnbilder und Beiworte Mariens in der deutschen Literatur u. lateinischen Hymnenpoesie des Mittelalters* (1886-94/repr. 1967), pp. 297, 495-497.

<sup>3</sup> RICHARD OF SAINT VICTOR, *In Cant.*, c. 23: PL 196, 475: "Haec autem sunt ubera tua, o beata; id est pietas, quibus miseros lactas, dum misericordiam eis impetras; lactas miseros et ab ipsa misericordia lactaris, ab ipsa percipis quod refundis." Thus, Mary herself is nourished from the milk of Divine Mercy in order to be able to feed us with it, through her intercession. It is mere symbolism.

<sup>4</sup> JAMES OF VORAGINE, *Mariale*, *Serm.* I.

<sup>5</sup> About the theme of the "lactatio," see A. PONCELOT, "Index miraculorum B.V.M. . . .," *Analecta Bollandiana* 21 (1902): 257, n° 184 (with 20 other references to similar accounts). For the iconography of the theme, see: *Lexikon der christlichen Ikonographie* 3, col. 5, s.v. "Lactatio," with other references. H. BARRÉ, *Prières anciennes . . .* (See note 3, p. 55 above.), p. 150, quotes in note 3 a very significant text from the Pseudo-Pothon:

There are other similar transpositions which need to be explained. Lanzoni, who studied the origins of the Virgin of Grace of Faenza,<sup>1</sup> demonstrated that this title and also the title *Mater misericordiae* became forms of the title *protectress against all danger*. The mantle of the Blessed Virgin was used to illustrate this theme. The Virgin of the Mantle did not come, therefore, from a vision of the Cistercian, Caesar of Heisterbach, as Perdrizet claimed in his now-outdated study from 1906.<sup>2</sup> Fr. Meersseman reminds us that St. Gregory of Tours introduced into the traditions of the West the Byzantine legend of the Jewish child being protected from flames by the pallium of the Theotokos.<sup>3</sup> We must return to Byzantine devotion through the Merovingian period.

A well-known book of devotion and of popular imagery, the *Speculum humanae salvationis*, shows how common it was to use the theme of the two reigns that God established: the reign of justice, which he retained for himself, and the reign of mercy, which he entrusted to Mary.<sup>4</sup> From this theme is

*Liber de miraculis sanctae Dei Genitricis Mariae* (Ed. B. Pez), p. 30. It shows how spiritual themes are difficult topics for iconographical representations and popular interpretations, and that our own explanations must always retain their symbolism: "Verum sub nomine lactis aliquando misericordia aut aliquando dulcedo supernae contemplationis solet exprimi. Quid ergo mirum si gloriosa Maria, mater omnis pietatis et misericordiae, per similitudinem lactis ex ubere suo, ita misericordiam devoto famulo impendit, cujus sacro lacte tenera fontis misericordiae, Jesu Christi scilicet Domini nostri, nutritur infantia . . ." See also *Bolletino d'arte del ministero* 2 (Rome, 1908): 397 (on purgatory); J. M. CANAL, "Sanctus Bernardus et Beata Virgo: Miraculum lactationis in textu inedito," *Ephemerides Mariologicae* 7 (1957): 483 s.

<sup>1</sup> FR. LANZONI, *Le origini della B. Vergine delle grazie di Faenza* (Firenze, 1925).

<sup>2</sup> P. PERDRIZET, *La Vierge de miséricorde. Étude d'un thème iconographique* (Paris, 1908), pp. 18 ff. See more modern literature in *Lexikon der christlichen Ikonographie* 4, cols. 128-133, s.v. "Schutzmantelschaft"; J. Seibert finds the origin of the theme in the medieval right, especially of women, to protect people by extending their mantle over them.

<sup>3</sup> GREGORY OF TOURS, I, 10: PL 71, 714. See G. G. MEERSSEMAN, *op. cit.*, I: 7. The life of St. Andrew the Fool, in *Acta Sanctorum* (Ed. May), VI: 87, tells how this saint saw "the Sovereign of the universe" praying for the people, pouring out her tears, at the Church of the Blachernes during the 9th century; and how she "spread out her veil to cover all the people"; see *Maria* (Ed. DuManoir), 1: 279 and 5: 956. In Russia, the patronage of Mary (October 1st) is symbolized by the veil/mantle; see *Maria* (Ed. DuManoir), 8 (Index), s.v. Pokrov.

<sup>4</sup> J. LUTZ and P. PERDRIZET, Eds., *Speculum humanae salvationis*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1907-09), I: 81 (text, c. 39, vv. 65-74): "Si enim in Patrem aut in Spiritum Sanctum peccavimus, / Christus potest nos reconciliare, et in hoc non diffidamus. / Et si peccavimus in Filium, hoc est in Jesum Christum / Habemus advocatam fidelem, quae intercedit pro nobis apud ipsum; / Christus ostendit Patri cicatrices vulnerum quae toleravit. / Maria ostendit Filio ubera, quibus eum lactavit / . . ."

derived the image of the threatening Divinity, on the one hand, and the image of the merciful Mary, on the other hand: *justitiam minabatur nobis Deus, per misericordiam succurrit nobis Maria*. At the beginning of the fourteenth century the pestilence began to desolate all of Europe. This calamity only intensified the sentiment of insecurity of the period. It was seen as proof of punishment, the judgment of God against a sinful mankind. Psalm 91, verses 5 and 6 (*non timebis a sagitta volante in tenebris, a peste*)<sup>1</sup> served, perhaps, to inspire the portrayal of God the Father as a figure armed with arrows or spears to punish mankind; this contrasted sharply with an iconography which illustrated the intercession of Mary and her mercy towards us, relating these to her title, "Mother," nurturer of the Son of God made flesh. In fact, in the *Speculum*, the help given to the misery of sinners was illustrated by the image of the Son showing his wounds to his Father and by the image of Mary showing to her Son the breast which fed him.<sup>2</sup> The explanation given by the *Speculum* is simplistic: if we have sinned against the Father or the Holy Spirit, we have our reconciliation in Christ; if we have sinned against Christ, Mary is our advocate. This is far removed from the religious psychology of St. Bernard.

At the beginning of the fifteenth century, the chancellor, Gerson, gives us a spiritual commentary on the *Magnificat* where one treatise is dedicated to the verse, *Et misericordia ejus a progenie in progenies, timentibus eum*. In the imaginative dialogue Gerson created between a master and his disciple, we can recognize both the mentality of the period and the religious genius of Gerson. The disciple exposes the problem, "fear comes from our ideas about justice." The *Magnificat* unites mercy and fear, singing of them together. How could Mary unite, in her song and in her meditation, both exultation of the spirit and lamentation on misery? The master answers, analyzing the different kinds of lamentation—distinguishing that of the damned (*lamentatio poenae*) from that of the Spouse of Christ, whose affliction is the sight of

<sup>1</sup> See also Richard of Saint Laurent and the use of *Deut.* 32:39 (in note 1, p. 51 above).

<sup>2</sup> Arnold of Bonneval († 1160?) already uses this image; see *De Laudibus B.M.*: PL 189, 1726. (See note 3, p. 50 above.) In *Speculum humanae salvationis*, Lutz and Perdrizet give a short history of the theme (I: 293-298), mentioning Arnold of Bonneval as source. It is unlikely that this iconography was inspired by the *Iliad* (22/39-80) where Homer describes Hecuba, mother of Hector, showing her breast to her son to beseech him not to fight against Achilles. The topics are different. It could only be said that these images are inspired by the same natural prototype: the mother-child relationship. On the other hand, it is Richard of Saint Laurent (as Pseudo-Albert the Great) who made the text of Arnold known, quoting it as a text of St. Bernard. (See note 2, p. 50 above.)



offenses against God. The greater this latter lamentation, the more it causes a joy that is essentially spiritual. Then he passes to Mary and to her role in our redemption. He uses the image of the Court of Justice and the Court of Mercy. We fear the Divine Justice; we are attracted by the God of Mercy: *damnat te thronus justitiae; adi cum fiducia thronum misericordiae*. The God of Mercy must be sought before it is too late, before the arrival of the hour of justice without appeal. There, Gerson invokes Mary, Queen of Mercy: May Mary defend our rights in the court of mercy with her Son: *defende jura curiae regni tui cum Filio tuo, dum sedes a dextris in eo, dum tempus est miserendi*. May she not wait until the hour of justice: *non remittas ad sedem justitiae, quoniam terribilis est nimis . . . ira ejus; horrendum est denique incidere in manus ejus, dicit Apostolus*. He implores the grace of her real pity towards himself: *Da mihi misero, mater misericordiae, quatenus miserear animae meae, placens Deo*.<sup>1</sup>

This doctrine places the images of the reign of mercy (the present one) and of justice (the reign to come) in their true context: a history of salvation by which God, Just and Merciful, saves us through his Son, if we believe in him. Mary is the one who believed, and Jesus formed in her the most eminent imitator of his own mercy, an imitator intimately associated to his redemption. The Courts of Justice and Mercy evoke the religious theater and similar literature of that time. One booklet from the 15th century is entitled *Tractatus procuratoris*:

...editus sub nomine diaboli: quoniam petit justitiam coram Deo; et beata virgo Maria se opposuit contra ipsum et obtinuit; necnon obmutuit pugna contra genus humanum.<sup>2</sup>

The author imagines a trial by which the devil wants justice. Men are sinners and, therefore, must be punished in hell. The Blessed Virgin turns aside this proposal. The virtues of Justice and of Mercy appear at the trial;

<sup>1</sup> J. GERSON, *Oeuvres complètes* (Ed. Glorieux), VIII: 265, 285, 286 ("Collect. super Magnificat," tract. 6). The "lamentatio" of the Bride in heaven, the Compassion of Mary for sinners, and, later, the sadness of Jesus or of Mary (her tears) in some apparitions—all reveal the same mysterious action of the Holy Spirit: his "deep sighs that cannot be expressed in human words (*gemitibus inenarrabilibus*: Rom. 8:26)." God, in His beatitude is the source of the Communion of All Saints, of their compassion for earthly miseries: for God is Mercy, and the wounds of Jesus illumine life everlasting.

<sup>2</sup> There is a copy in the Marian Library, University of Dayton (149101500). See also "Advocacie Notre-Dame," cited by P. PERDRIZET in *La Vierge de miséricorde* (See note 2, p. 58 above.), p. 247: a poem-drama for theatre, written by "Jean de Justice," canon of Bayeux († 1353).

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Peace asks them to embrace: *misericordia et veritas osculatae sunt*. The play concludes with the "*Salve*": *Eia ergo, advocata nostra illos tuos misericordes oculos ad nos converte. . . .*

## *Conclusion*

The temptation to overdramatize the theme of justice/mercy is manifest in the Middle Ages. But their Marian piety led Christians then to understand better a God of justice and mercy in the mystery of Christ. In him, justice and mercy appear united in God. By participating in such a redemption, Mary is our model and our help, in conformity with the plan of God Himself.

Dramatization is part of our mental structures; we find it at every stage of the cultural evolution of mankind: from the drawings and pictures of prehistoric times through the theatrical works of Sophocles, Greban, Shakespeare, Racine, Goethe, Claudel, Anouilh, even to the popular movies or television productions of today. Great preachers were (are) dramatists; however, it requires the real genius of an Augustine to deal with biblical-antithetical symbols, like Eve/Mary. The great scholastics were able to describe, by their *Sic et non*, the various facets of the human drama hidden in the true doctrine of our salvation and to elaborate a theology of the relationship between God and man. The deepest roots of this drama exist and are revealed in Jesus and his Mother.

As for all other themes, mysteries of life, the dramatization of the relationships and the ruptures between God and mankind is expressed in discourse, in "word," our *Logos*. Yet this *Logos* can be reduced to the mere expression of fear and reactions to fear. This kind of dramatization seeks a simplistic solution: to find and to establish security. But this kind of security is an artificial social structure arising from a need to express human limits: from tribal taboos to the complicated legal systems of modern cities (patrolling of the streets, etc.). It is like a garment which covers and hides a reality now unbearable. The dramatizations of the Middle Ages exemplify such expressions of the mystery of God and man; their understanding of even Christ and Mary and the Communion of Saints shows forth fear-reactions, security-seeking. People then found it difficult—as we all do today—to remain faithful to the truth. Jesus, the true *Logos*, eliminates fear and the need for false security because He is, He expresses, an infinite Love: God, in whom Justice, Pardon, and Mercy are perfectly united.

For the people of the Bible, the human drama began with the rupture between God and our ancestors, Adam and Eve: meaning, between God and

"man" as an individual (a person) and as a collectivity (all mankind). Our humanity—the family of God from the creation of Adam and Eve—broke down in a succession of divisions, of incomprehensions and sins. Saint Bernard (in the text quoted above) dramatized this rupture in a comment very similar to the Yahwist text. Adam and Eve—once sinners—are afraid of God. They hide: they seek security, shelter, dress . . . going away from God. Thus God gives to this humanity, lost in reactions of fear, a new Adam, a new Eve: the Son of God, Jesus, as Mediator and the Mother of God, Mary, as Advocate. Bernard proclaims the drama of our human life changed into salvation: the Son of God "facing" his Father, Mary "facing" her Son, our Mediator and Judge. Both reveal to us that mercy and justice are fully respected in the plan of God. Jesus told this to some scribes and pharisees in the parable of the owner of a vineyard who generously paid full wages to the workers of the last hour, while paying the same salary to those who worked all the day (Mt. 20: 1-15). In short, we pass from the anthropomorphical language of the Yahwist, dramatizing the rupture between God and our ancestors, to a dramatization quite like the Bible's, by which Bernard expresses the effort of Tradition to avoid any easy way out: neither to suppress a very real drama (for we face a God infinitely holy, just and merciful who cannot cease to be infinitely just and merciful), nor to suppress the ways of God Himself entering into this drama (which must be accepted and not just solved or suppressed). There is no *Deus ex machina*. God gives us a new Adam and a new Eve who bring us to the encounter (personally and collectively) with Himself: the God of justice and mercy. He Himself becomes the new Adam for his people, his spouse, the new Eve. This revelation shows us that the encounters between Jesus and his Father, Mary and her Son, the sinner and Mary form the preparation for our encounter with the eternal Love and Holiness of the Holy Trinity. Encounter here means close union, not the opposition of enemies. Facing Mary, the sinner enters into the ways of the Incarnation: he learns to face Jesus, to face the Father of justice and mercy.

The analysis by *videtur quod sic, quod non* formulated the human drama of salvation at a rational level. Later, this became a transposition moving more and more away from the human experience and the realistic ways of God revealed in the Old and the New Testaments. It degraded into nominalism, into idealism and finally into psychological existentialism. Such solutions tried to escape from the reality of the human drama. Nominalism is a reduction to an intellectual projection and a language which is seen as a *flatus vocis*; the human *logos* cannot receive an incarnation of the divine

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Logos; for nominalism, the "Other" is without analogy. Modern idealism traces back to Plato; we are trapped in our thoughts, believing that we are safe because only our ideals exist. We come to an illusory truth and we have to jump into another security, mere fideism: I believe because I believe. In our times, we hear the sardonic cry of some forms of existentialism, because we cannot escape the experience of evil. But running away into absurdity is again an illusory denial of the real drama. God becoming the Suffering Servant, Jesus dying on the cross, and Mary, his suffering Mother—these are the true new Adam and new Eve who reveal to us that God-Love is present, God-with-us: Emmanuel. With them there is no juggling away the reality of our human drama.